

# **ANDORRA 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The Roman Catholic Church receives some special privileges, however. Some immigrant religious workers were unable to obtain religious working permits because there is a lack of legal definition of “religious worker.”

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

During periodic visits to the country, the U.S. Consul General in Barcelona and consulate general representatives discussed religious freedom with the government as well as civil society leaders and offered them opportunities to participate in programs addressing religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 85, 300 (July 2013 estimate). The government does not provide statistics on size of religious groups and there is no census data on religious group membership. Observers estimate that the majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Smaller religious groups include Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, Bahais, the Unification Church, the New Apostolic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. There is no specific legislation on the treatment and recognition of religious groups or on religious freedom.

The constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Catholic Church “in accordance with Andorran tradition” and recognizes the “full legal capacity” of the bodies of the Catholic Church, granting them legal status “in accordance with their own rules.” The Catholic Church receives some special privileges not available to

## ANDORRA

other religious groups; for instance, the government pays the salaries of Catholic priests and grants them the Andorran nationality. One of the two constitutionally designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the president of France) is the Bishop of Urgell, Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, of the Spanish town of La Seu d'Urgell.

Religious communities are not legally recognized as such but are registered as cultural organizations. The law does not require religious groups to register. The law of associations does not specifically mention religious groups. To build a place of worship or seek government financial support, however, a religious group must register as a non-profit cultural organization and acquire legal personality. To register or re-register, a group must provide its statutes and foundation agreement, a statement certifying the names of persons appointed to the board or other official positions in the organization, and a patrimony declaration that identifies the inheritance or endowment of the organization. A consolidated register of associations records all types of associations, including religious groups.

Local authorities can assign or grant space for places of worship.

Instruction in the Catholic religion is optional in public schools, outside of both regular school hours and the time set aside for elective school activities, such as civics or ethics. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries.

### **Government Practices**

Some immigrant religious workers were unable to obtain religious working permits because there is a lack of legal definition of “religious worker.”

In a report published May 22, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe noted there is still little public knowledge about the different religious groups present in the country, and recommended the authorities promote initiatives to inform the population. The report also pointed out that minority religious groups do not have cemeteries where they can bury their dead in accordance with their religious beliefs and customs. The Jewish community, for example, used cemeteries in Toulouse, France and Barcelona, Spain. ECRI recommended the government find a solution to this increasing problem.

## **ANDORRA**

The government provides support to one Catholic non-governmental organization and its projects.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Societal attitudes among religious groups appeared to be amicable and tolerant. For example, the Catholic Church of Santa Maria del Fener, in Andorra la Vella, lent its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy could conduct services for the English-speaking community.

Ten religious communities make up the Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Andorran National Commission for UNESCO collaborated with the group, which met periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and convictions.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

During periodic visits, the Ambassador, the Consul General, and officials from the Consulate General in Barcelona discussed religious freedom with members of religious groups and with government officials.